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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: THE INSIDE OUT

Abstract: This article deals with relevance, notion and structural components of intercultural communication. The process of globalization is considered to be the starting point of cross-cultural communication. The article touches on the subject of cultural shock as a result of misunderstanding between the interacting cultures. The author gives several classifications of intercultural communication, which were developed by Russian and foreign scholars, and gives different definitions of cross-cultural communication, thus saying that the two terms (intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication) are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. The substance of intercultural communication reveals itself in social interaction, where empathy is the essential quality for productive, successful intercultural communication. Cross-cultural communication is believed to consist of not only the interaction process, which embraces interaction skills and language knowledge, but also of the process where interacting cultures influence each other, and even individuals' world-views. Due to acceptance of a different culture and some transformations that happen in one cultural representative's mind under influence of another culture, it can be observed how empathy grows into pluralism.

Keywords: interaction, culture, cultural shock, communication.

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МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ: ВЗГЛЯД ИЗНУТРИ

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается актуальность, понятие, а также структурные компоненты межкультурной коммуникации. Процесс глобализации считается отправным пунктом для межкультурной коммуникации. В тексте статьи говорится о культурном шоке как о результате недопонимания, возникающего между носителями разных культур. Автор приводит несколько классификаций межкультурной коммуникации, разработанных отечественными и зарубежными учеными, и даёт несколько определений межкультурной коммуникации, тем самым подчёркивая, что оба термина (*intercultural communication* and *cross-cultural communication*) синонимичны и могут использоваться взаимозаменяемо. Основная идея межкультурной коммуникации заключается в социальном взаимодействии, где эмпатия берётся как основное качество для продуктивного, успешного межкультурного взаимодействия. Полагается, что межкультурная коммуникация состоит не только из самого процесса взаимодействия, который охватывает навыки сотрудничества с людьми и знание языка, но также и тот факт, что, когда разные культуры находятся во взаимодействии, они влияют друг на друга, в результате расширяя картину мира людей. Благодаря принятию иной культуры и изменениям, которые происходят в мышлении носителя одной культуры под влиянием другой, мы можем проследить, как эмпатия превращается в плюрализм.

Ключевые слова: взаимодействие, культура, культурный шок, коммуникация.

Globalization blurs cultural and national boundaries and makes them less prominent. This process embraces every country and culture.

Engaging in different spheres of communication, one may face problems in understanding people who have other cultural backgrounds. People may deal with various stereotypes, identity conflicts, have a lack of empathy, or simply possess insufficient language or interaction skills for fruitful communication. This may lead to the so-called «cultural shock». Cultural shock is a natural state of psychological and physical disorientation that can occur upon encountering a new environment and culture. Intercultural communication as a process aims to avoid this problem and prepare communicators for a successful interaction.

It may seem clear what the intercultural communication is, though there are various points of view on that topic. The names of the notion may differ, but the gist is quite similar.

The shortest definition can be as follows: cross-cultural communication is the communication, which occurs between people belonging to different cultures.

Scholars, who deal with comparativism, would define it as the comparison of communication across cultures. However, this definition does not reflect the process of interaction, perception of a partner, but simply describes one way of expressing thoughts in a language comparing it with the other way afterwards.

As Vereshagin and Kostomarov believe, intercultural communication is «an adequate mutual understanding of the two participants of communication, who belong to different national cultures» [4]. The key word of this definition is «understanding», that may imply not only the verbal aspect of communication (knowledge of a language), but also non-verbal (empathy). Moreover, adequate understanding helps to avoid cultural shock.

This idea is developed by G.A. Avenesova who argues that «intercultural interaction is a special kind of direct relations which connect at least two cultures, and also some impact and mutual alteration occurring in these relationships» [1]. Intercultural communication is not only verbal communication, or mutual understanding of two or more interacting cultures, but also the process when cultures affect each other, broadening people's minds and expanding views on the world. It should be mentioned that we use terms «intercultural communication» and «cross-cultural communication» interchangeably.

It is of utmost importance in cross-cultural communication to have good interaction skills, in particular, speaking skills. Here we can introduce the term language contacts. These are contacts that occupy the

lowest interaction skills stage. Language contacts can be found within one nation. It is difficult to imagine a nation where people would speak in the same way, regardless of their social status, occupation, age and place of residence. In fact, the majority of people have social dialects at least, and many of them have to use different accents of a language (e.g. British, American, Australian English) and even different languages for interaction. Thus, we see that «language contacts are a universal phenomenon» [5]. That means that they can occur not necessarily between different distant cultures, but also within one nation.

20th century scholars stated that the interaction between a language and a cultural representative has only dialectical nature. Meanwhile, Sadokhin was sure that «almost all the scholars see the influence of a language and a culture on each other. <...> But the impact of the latter is more distinct» [7]. Hence, we can see that a culture affects a language even more. That can be shown in the way how people think, how they see, perceive the world.

Facing a new culture, a person broadens not only his or her mind, but also the boundaries of his or her world views. The way people «feel» the world, what they see, is reflected in the words and how their language is created. Moreover, «no situation can be perceived impartially, only through the prism of norms and values accepted in the usual language environment» [2]. Intercultural communication works in these conditions, where a new cultural system is imposed on a person at the moment of leaving their usual language environment.

Scholars who study intercultural communication have different points of view on its classification.

The most theoretically based classification was suggested by V.P. Baransky. Within his theory of the social ideal, he identifies four basic principles of interaction between representatives of competing ideals: the principle of fundamentalism (intransigence), the principle of compromise; principle of arbitration (neutralization); principle of convergence (synthesis) [6].

One of the best-known classifications was developed by an American anthropologist Ph. K. Bock. This scholar identifies five basic models for optimizing intercultural interaction, corresponding to different ways of overcoming cultural shock:

- the first model is ghettoization (enclosure from any contact with a foreign culture through the creation and maintenance of its own closed cultural environment);

- the second model is assimilation (rejection of one's own culture and the desire to fully assimilate the cultural knowledge of a foreign culture necessary for daily life);
- the third model is cultural exchange and interaction (intermediate method, which implies benevolence and openness of both sides to each other);
- the fourth model is partial assimilation (a concession in favor of a foreign cultural environment in one of the spheres of life while remaining faithful towards its traditional culture in other spheres);
- the fifth model is colonization (actively imposing a culture of one's own values, norms and behaviors) [8] .

The latter typology is considered to be more detailed and clearer in comparison with other classifications. It provides a well-developed explanation of various types of intercultural interaction. However, the models of the perception of different cultures rely on the social component that takes the leading role here.

One of the most important components of intercultural communication is the way people show empathy towards others. Empathy aims to predict a partner's behavior. If a person expects something to happen as a natural flow of events, this will create an atmosphere of safety, hence intercultural communication is a productive way to help people to communicate with each other and overcome cultural or linguistic barriers. Then empathy transfers to recognition of cultural pluralism as a result of positive intercultural interaction experience. B.R. Mogilevich emphasizes that pluralism is possible as a result of close social communications, direct / indirect, unilateral / multilateral, formal / informal. For instance, reading literature in a foreign language in order to broaden one's horizons, erudition, and enhance one's professional abilities is an indirect social connection; conducting business negotiations is a direct social connection; learning process is a multilateral social connection; relations of subordination in the army are a formal social connection, etc. [3].

Social intercultural interaction is carried out with the help of different symbols (verbal, non-verbal, paraverbal), the general meaning of which is a necessary condition for its implementation. Moreover, the stages of adaptation, empathy and pluralism are replaced by mutual integration, accompanied by contextual assessment. This stage is characterized by the fact that a universal intercultural personality, capable of recognizing and accepting an intercultural social reality, choosing actions that are adequate

to this or that social-cultural context, taking into account the spatial and temporal parameters of communication, is being formed.

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